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HOUSE MEMORIAL 31

**48TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2007**

INTRODUCED BY

Edward C. Sandoval

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE HUMAN SERVICES DEPARTMENT TO ENSURE THAT  
TRANSLATION SERVICES ARE PROVIDED TO THE EXTENT OF AVAILABILITY  
OF FEDERAL FUNDS FOR MEDICAID CLIENTS.

WHEREAS, the federal centers for medicare and medicaid  
services cover language services, or interpreters, as an  
administrative or optional service in both the medicaid and  
state children's health insurance programs; and

WHEREAS, the federal centers directly reimburse providers  
for costs of interpreters for medicaid and children's health  
insurance services; and

WHEREAS, a language other than English is spoken in the  
homes of more than seventeen percent of Americans; and

WHEREAS, Spanish is the native language of more than  
twenty-eight percent and Navajo is the native language of four

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1 percent of New Mexicans; and

2 WHEREAS, according to the 2000 census, more than thirty-  
3 seven thousand households in New Mexico were "linguistically  
4 isolated", or completely non-English speaking; and

5 WHEREAS, only approximately a dozen states are providing  
6 reimbursement for interpreters with federal dollars; and

7 WHEREAS, without an interpreter, a medicaid or children's  
8 health insurance client may make critical decisions based on a  
9 faulty understanding of the situation; and

10 WHEREAS, research indicates that people with limited  
11 English proficiency are less likely to have a regular source of  
12 health care, receive preventive care and be satisfied with  
13 their care; and

14 WHEREAS, language disparities in health result in poor  
15 health outcomes; and

16 WHEREAS, federal funds for interpreters can be provided,  
17 depending on the structure of a department's request, based on  
18 an individual client's needs and upon the predictable needs of  
19 public hospitals and health departments or even of providers  
20 that are not public entities; and

21 WHEREAS, New Mexico health care providers who provide  
22 interpreter services are not reimbursed by the state for their  
23 services; and

24 WHEREAS, Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964  
25 requires health care providers who receive federal funds to

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1 ensure access to services for people with limited English  
2 proficiency; and

3 WHEREAS, using a competent interpreter can improve a  
4 patient's quality of care, decrease health care costs by  
5 eliminating unnecessary diagnostic testing and medical errors  
6 and by enhancing patients' understanding of and compliance with  
7 treatments;

8 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF  
9 REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the human  
10 services department study ways to attract federal dollars for a  
11 program that provides interpreters for medicaid and children's  
12 health insurance programs; and

13 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the human services department  
14 apply for federal funds for the interpreter service plan it  
15 endorses; and

16 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the human services department  
17 report to the interim legislative health and human services  
18 committee and the welfare reform oversight committee on its  
19 proposal to the federal government for funds for a state  
20 interpreter program; and

21 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be  
22 transmitted to the governor, the secretary of human services  
23 and the chairs of the interim legislative health and human  
24 services and welfare reform oversight committees.